
A PLAIN LECTURE.

TO ENQUIRERS INTO THE

MEANING OF THE LITURGY.

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"Oh, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong, without rage; without o'erflowing, full."

DENHAM.

LECTURE.

There is nothing which so perplexes a Non-Episcopalian as the Episcopal service, when heard for the first time. The whole routine of it is so different from what he has been accustomed to, that he is naturally tempted to ask, "What mean ye by this service?" To answer this question rationally, and, I trust, satisfactorily, shall be the aim of the present lecture, which has been written with a view of giving a brief and popular explanation of the Episcopal Liturgy.

In such a treatise there is no need of proving either the utility or necessity of public prayer. We shall take it for granted that all denominations agree in observing the apostolic command, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." All religions prescribe, all nations practise, and unprejudiced reason recommends the pious, profitable and becoming custom of offering the homage of our souls and bodies to the Lord of heaven and earth in the public service of the congregation. So, then, we need not waste time in defending by Scriptural authority, a practice which (however it may be, and is, awfully neglected) all christians allow to be an enjoined duty, but shall at once proceed to examine what it is which men "come together in the Church"* to do, and having ascertained this, to find out the best mode of carrying their intentions into effect. Now, if we ask an Episcopalian why he assembles with his brethren on the Lord's day, he will reply in the language of the Church, "To render thanks for the great benefits we have received at God's hands, to set forth His most worthy praise, to hear His most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul." Here is a definite and intelligible answer. But let us next ask a Non-Episcopalian the same question, and as he has no *form* of words in which to reply, we must judge of his an-

* 1 Cor. xi., 8.

answer by his conduct and his ordinary phraseology, when speaking of public worship. What, then, is his common language? He speaks of "going to meeting," which expresses and explains nothing, or of "going to preaching," which shews plainly what is running in his mind as his principal business on hand; his main idea is that the sermon is the chief object of attraction. Now observe that, in the Episcopalian's answer, there was no reference to the sermon, because the phrase, "*To hear His most holy word,*" refers to the selections of holy Scripture to be read, which *must* form part of *his* service. This omission in the Episcopalian's answer does not arise from his despising or disparaging the preaching of the Gospel—by no means; it only proves that he believes that a sermon is not an *essential* part of public worship. He only puts it in its proper place, as a useful addition to the services of the Lord's day, but not *his* chief or only attraction. His feelings are somewhat of the following kind: "I am formed for another world—this life is but the dawn of my existence; I must learn to anticipate the life to come—to be taught the language, inspired with the temper, and instructed in the habits of that heaven for which I was originally formed, and to which I should habitually tend. There will be no 'work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave,' whither I am going. There will be no preaching in heaven; but there will be there prayer, praise, holy contemplation, the society of purified spirits, the presence of the great God, and the ministration of His will throughout worlds and systems unknown and unimagined. These I must learn to relish by anticipation, or I shall never enjoy them in reality. I go to the Church, therefore, to enjoy a foretaste of that occupation which St. John described, when an insight was vouchsafed to him of the glories of futurity, and when 'he beheld the multitude which no man could number, who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.'"

It is necessary to bear in mind that these sentiments must be impressed on the heart before any one can thoroughly

appreciate the English Liturgy. A pious Churchman believes the Lord's house to be what his Saviour intends it shall be—"a house of *prayer*;" and let us now consider how we ought to engage in it most reverently and usefully. The first peculiarity which strikes a Non-Episcopalian, is the fact that an Episcopal clergyman is not allowed in public worship to say whatever he likes in behalf of the congregation, when he addresses God in prayer. He is restricted to a pre-composed form of prayer, which his congregation have in their hands, and with which they ought to be as well acquainted as he is himself. To this arrangement numerous objections are urged, and we will therefore consider them in detail. The first objection is a serious one, which, if true, of course renders all other objections unnecessary, namely, that forms of prayer are unlawful under the Gospel dispensation, inasmuch as we are promised that "God would give us a spirit of grace and of supplication," and that the spirit would "teach us what to pray for as we ought;" consequently that a greater freedom, in addressing the Almighty, is allowable, than under the law, &c. But surely these passages, and such as these only mean that God would give his people a love, and taste, and relish for prayer; not that he would supernaturally inspire ministers in the act of offering up prayer for a congregation. That cannot be unlawful in itself, in which our Lord joined in the temple—the services of which were pre-composed; such a thing as extemporary prayers (or at the spur of the moment) being altogether unknown to the Jewish people; and had our Lord intended to have changed the manner of prayer, from the Liturgical to the extemporary system, He surely would not have been so unwise as to have set a trap and stumbling-block in our way, by giving us a *form* of prayer, which he not only ordered us to take as a model, but to use in the very words He prescribed. He not only commanded us, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye," but also, "*When ye pray, say, Our Father*"—Matt. vi., 9, and Luke xi., 2. Now if He intended to supersede the old system of pre-composed prayers, He would surely have said so on those occasions which naturally suggested some allusion to

the intended change, and would not have acted in such a way as to mislead the whole Christian Church, which (on the supposition that extemporary prayer is the only lawful one) was sadly mistaken for 1500 years. Again, our Lord, by the use of the plural number in His prayer, led us to believe that He intended it for *social*, not private prayer only; He would not have drawn up His form to suit a congregation, by using the words "our" and "us" all through it, if He intended it for use in private prayers only; and what makes this argument stronger, is the fact that He well knew His disciples would understand Him to mean that He wished this form to be for public use, because the Lord's Prayer is not an original composition, but an epitome of the eighteen prayers then used by the Jews in their Liturgy, with the addition of one clause, "as we forgive them that trespass against us," and also because our Lord added to it a doxology, which was never used by the Jews except in public worship. Certainly, therefore, if our Lord intended to establish extemporary prayer as the rule in His Church, He took a most extraordinary way of telling us so, so extraordinary, indeed, that no one discovered His intention till 1500 years after His ascension. Moreover, if the system of extemporary prayer in public worship prevailed in the Apostolic age, it is absolutely impossible that such a noticeable event—as a transition to pre-composed forms—could have taken place without dispute in the Church, debate in councils, or remark in history, none of which are to be found—as the Ecclesiastical student well knows. We may well therefore, use the same argument to prove Liturgical worship Apostolic, which Chillingworth used to prove Episcopacy Apostolic.

Forms of prayer are acknowledged to have been universally received in the Church presently after the Apostles' times.

Between the Apostles' times and this presently after, there was not time enough for, nor possibility of, so great an alteration.

And therefore there was no such alteration, and therefore forms of prayer being confessed to be so ancient and catholic must be granted also to be Apostolic.

To this we may add, that if prayer, according to a pre-composed form be an Apostolic practice, we may safely conclude that the Apostles *understood* our Lord to prescribe set forms when he established the precedent of the Lord's prayer.

The lawfulness of forms of prayer is further established from the consideration of this fact, that Almighty God under the first dispensation always evinced his desire that his people should address him in well-weighed and carefully expressed language. Whatever be the reason of the fact, (arising perhaps from the knowledge of a perverse tendency of our nature to slide from familiarity into contempt, and from carelessness of expression into irreverence in conduct,) *a fact, it is*, that God prescribed forms in which he should be approached in prayer. By the mouth of Hosea He directed the Jews to use a prearranged form:—"Take with you words and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips."—Hosea xiv., 2.; Joel ii., 17. In Numbers vi., 22, we find that He commanded Aaron to use a prescribed form of blessing: "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, *On this wise* ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, the Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace." But it would be tedious to enumerate all those places in which set forms are either directly or incidentally proved to have been well pleasing to God, the whole worship of God's people having been so compiled as not to come under the censure of the wise man, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few."—Ex. v., 2. A system then which pervades the whole of the Old Testament, with God's approval and prescription, surely requires a *very formal repeal* in the New Testament to make us believe it unlawful when adopted in Christian worship. But have we *any* intimation of such abolition of forms? On the contrary, St. John tells us that even in heaven the saints sing the song

of Moses, which was part of the Jewish Liturgy.—Rev. xv., 3. The Apostles, St. Peter and St. John, (had they intended to put an end to forms of prayer,) would not have gone “up to the temple at the hour of prayer.”—Acts iii., 1. Let us remember, also, that at this time they were enlightened by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which was guiding them into all truth,” and yet they went up to the temple worship “daily and with one accord,” and what is also to the point, the Holy Spirit provided that their conduct should be put on record, as part of inspired scripture, for our guidance and instruction.

Another strong reason for believing the Apostles to have continued the practice of Liturgical worship, arises from the fact, that we no where find the Christians taunted by the Jews with having innovated in this respect. And yet men who were so wedded to their own rites and ceremonies would certainly have taken offence at such an innovation, had it been attempted, and would have urged it as a strong ground of complaint against the Christians. But enough has been said to shew that prayer, according to a prescribed form, is not *unlawful*.

The next objection against forms of prayer that we shall notice, is the want of *variety* in divine services—that the sameness of prayer Sunday after Sunday begets dulness and heartlessness in devotion. Now in the Episcopal service, on the contrary, there is much variety where variety can be had with edification. Different lessons from holy scripture are read on every Sunday, and also different psalms; there are separate epistles and gospels, and a special collect for every Lord's day, while the hymns and psalms may be variously used at every service. True, there is little or no variety in our prayers, and why should there be? Are not our wants the same from week to week? and should not supplications for the supply of those wants be the same also? The blessings necessary for a Christian congregation's temporal or eternal welfare are always the same, why then should not the form in which we implore them be ever constant? But it is said variety is a stimulus to devotional feeling. We doubt it much. If a man be in need of variety in his prayers to

make him relish them, his soul must be in a sickly morbid condition. As Dean Comber well remarks, "it is wantonness, not devotion, which makes variation of phrase necessary. The poor, laborious, healthful man hath a fresh appetite to the same dish, and 'tis sickly and luxurious men that need sauces and variety. The carnal Jews loathed manna with long use, though it was the bread of heaven, and suited itself to every good man's taste." Let a man only have a devotional spirit, and he will soon possess himself of a true variety in his worship. Public prayer must be in a great degree general. It must, says Paley, be calculated for the average condition of human and christian life. When a devout worshipper joins in general thanksgiving, he "brings to church the recollection of special mercies and particular bounties vouchsafed to himself individually." These, of course, will be various from day to day, and "these he bears in his thoughts—he applies as he proceeds—that which was general he makes close and circumstantial;" and we may add, the sameness of the expressions from day to day will not prevent him from making that well known form of prayer or praise the chariot in which he sends aloft his *various* private wants and his *various* personal thanksgivings.

If then variety in language does not necessarily promote devotional feeling, we can imagine no other reason for insisting on it, unless indeed it be foolishly supposed that God is more pleased with the petitions which are offered up with the qualification of variety, than with a set form of prayer. But God is to be propitiated neither by flowers of rhetoric nor by variety of language. Nay, when he became incarnate and was in an agony he prayed "the more earnestly" three times for relief, "*saying the same words.*" He did not disdain to use a prayer from the Jewish Liturgy when on the cross he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" * nor yet again when expiring He breathed out His soul in these words, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."† But why insist further when the fact is patent that variety, even when most urgently sought after, is seldom

* Psalm xxii., 1.

† Psalm xxxi., 5.

found. He must indeed be an extraordinary person who can clothe the same ideas, the same requests for pardon, the same confession of the same sins, in different phraseology every Sunday for the whole year. The only variety will be in alternation of sentences and the permutation of the order in which the phrases are arranged; and if the prayers of one year were taken down in shorthand from the speaker's mouth, we should find on critical examination that there was after all but *one* prayer—the same body, but in different dress, the clothing being sometimes bright and sometimes gloomy, sometimes well-fitting and sometimes ill-fitting, sometimes fine and sometimes coarse.

We are inclined to go farther than to say that variety is not necessary to devotion, and say that it is sometimes a hindrance to devotion. While the mind is occupied in detecting the novelty in expression it cannot be engaged in pious emotion. The mind cannot serve two masters, and if it be occupied with the phraseology *at all*, it cannot be wholly intent on devotion. Now, unless the variety of language be perceived it is hard to imagine its operating usefully, and if it *be* noticed the mind is divided in its attention. This effect of variety may be estimated best if we suppose a public service held for the express purpose of adding zest to devotion, or intensifying feeling when all the machinery for producing a revival is brought into play. On such occasions does the minister read a new chapter, one not familiar to the people, or does he not select the one he knows is most likely to tell on the people, and will not that be the very one with which they are best acquainted? Does he give out a new hymn, however beautiful, or does he not select the most widely known and commonly used? As a well known writer has justly observed, "a new tune or hymn, daily resorted to for variety, would kill a revival in a week." When excitement and warmth of feeling are the object to be gained, a new hymn, by a new author, is never resorted to, but one as familiar to the audience as the Liturgy is to the Churchman, one of Wesley's, or Heber's, or Watts'. In short, as there is least variety in those things which our

bodies need most, and as a healthy person never wearies of the common air, and bread and water, so a well-regulated mind will not look for variety in its spiritual nourishment, but will, when engaging in prayer, "hold fast the form of sound words," whenever it is once for all satisfied with the soundness and the sweetness of those words.

The next objection to forms of prayer (at least to those of the Episcopal Church) which we shall notice, is, that there are too many repetitions in them—that we say the Lord's Prayer too often—that we unnecessarily repeat "Good Lord deliver us," and "We beseech thee to hear us good Lord," and "Lord have mercy upon us;" thus, as it is said, rendering ourselves liable to our Lord's censure, of using "vain repetitions." First, as regards the too frequent use of the Lord's prayer; we would observe that the repetition of it arises from no defect in the Liturgy, but from the fact that we have come to use three distinct services at the same time of worship, whereas they were intended to be used separately, with an interval between them. Now as it is a principle of our worship never to have any form of service in which the Lord's Prayer does not hold a prominent place, fulfilling the command of our Lord, "*When ye pray, say, Our Father,*" of course the Lord's prayer comes to be repeated frequently at the same service. But this arrangement (if it be a defect) can be readily altered whenever the Church thinks fit—it is not the fault of the Liturgy, but of those who prescribe how the Liturgy shall be used—and should morning prayer, the Litany, and Communion Service, be ever used in such a way as to show more fully the distinction of services, this objection regarding the Lord's Prayer will be taken away.

But even though the Lord's Prayer were used three or four times during the same morning's service, still we deny that we should be incurring the imputation of using "vain repetitions." The word translated "vain repetitions," Matt. vi., 7, literally in the Greek means "the language of Battus," or such verbosity as this person (whoever he was) was accustomed to use. We can judge, however, from the

latter clause of the sentence what it was which our Lord intended to reprove. The "vain repetitions" which he forbade were such "as the heathen" uttered, for, said the Saviour, "They think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." An instance of this custom of the heathen is to be found in 1 Kings xviii., 26, where we find the priests of Baal calling "from morning even until noon, 'O Baal, hear us,'" so that we cannot be said to be guilty of using vain repetitions, unless we pray under the delusion that a prayer is acceptable to God just in proportion to its length, and that God will more favourably regard a prayer uttered a hundred times than if it were uttered fifty times only. That our Lord did not mean to condemn *length* of prayer, provided it were intelligently offered, is evident (as St. Augustine says) from the fact that He Himself spent "a whole night in prayer to God;" neither did He mean to censure the repeating the same prayer many times, since Himself thrice prayed in the same words; therefore the sin He condemned was the *idea of merit in the mere length to which a prayer might be spun out*. The other repetitions objected to in the Liturgy are so far from being objectionable, that the use of them is founded on a knowledge of the human mind and natural emotions. The employment of such repetitions as "Lord have mercy upon us," &c., are found fault with by an indevout mind alone. As Paley has well remarked, "The spirit of devotion reconciles us to repetitions. In other subjects repetitions soon become tiresome; in devotion it is different. Deep, earnest, heartfelt devotion *naturally vents itself* in repetitions. Observe a person racked by excruciating bodily pain, or a person struck with the news of some dreadful calamity, or a person labouring under some cutting anguish of soul, and you will always find him breaking out into ejaculations imploring from God support, mercy, and relief, over and over again uttering the same prayer in the same words. Nothing he finds suits so well the extremity of his sufferings as a continual recurrence to the same cries, and the same call for Divine aid." How often may the truth of these remarks be verified among

worshippers who are listening to their minister composing a prayer for them. They now and again break out into loud "Amen," sometimes ejaculating, "Lord have mercy upon us," sometimes by groans and short sentences, either imploring mercy or expressing assent to what they hear uttered. Now if all this is reasonable and natural at extemporary prayer meetings, why is it not allowable in the Litany? Who shall find fault with an Episcopalian for using the same language which is constantly used by those who censure his prayers? If it be said that the use of these ejaculatory prayers are left to the voluntary adoption of those who worship after the extemporary method, whereas the Episcopal Church puts them into the mouth of all worshippers indiscriminately, we reply, that it is true that the Church expects that all who come into God's house to worship, *ought* to be in such a frame of mind as that those ejaculations should best express their emotions of contrition and remorse; but it is also true that all Churchmen do not join in these responses as they should. To their shame be it spoken, the use of these heartfelt ejaculations is by no means universal among Liturgical worshippers, no more than it is among all who attend a Wesleyan or Presbyterian service; still its tendency is toward edification, and all who do not join in it are convicted of a sad inconsistency between the prayers of the Church and their own feelings, by the very Prayer Book in their hands.

But this charge of repetition may be most easily retorted. Oh! the dire repetitions of him who prays frequently and publicly extempore. The dread of breaking down, and of being at a loss for a word, of course prevents his mind from being rivetted on Him to whom he is speaking; but this is not all—he finds that he is expected to diversify his prayers with new ideas or words; this, when prayer is often made, becomes a great difficulty, and under the pressure of embarrassment repetition succeeds repetition, unless indeed the prayer has been committed to memory, in which case it ceases to be extemporary, and becomes the rehearsal of a lesson.

There is yet another objection to the use of forms in public

worship, arising from the alleged fact that extemporary prayer is more likely to be sincere, and that the idea of sincerity in the minister tends to edification. This is of course a merely ideal objection; it scarcely deserves reply, as it is the extreme of uncharitableness to suppose that they who use forms cannot pray as sincerely as those who do not use them. After all, the great point to be gained is sincerity in the *congregation*. The sincerity of the minister cannot be applied to the people. A greater apparent intentness must always characterise an extemporary prayer, because inattention would end in a break down. But if the people are engaged as they should be, not in gazing at the minister, but with bowed faces absorbed in devotion, then to what good purpose is it urged that the minister *seems* more earnest. Is he a spectacle the sight of which is to promote devotion? His apparent earnestness cannot serve even for a profitable gazing-stock unless it be watched, and if it be watched, are the people employed as they should be when pretending to be in the act of "taking upon them to speak unto the Lord?"

We admit, indeed, that in extemporary prayer there is oftentimes more *apparent* sincerity—we know full well that when the attraction of novelty is wanting "the reader will often be negligent, and the hearers will often be cold." But put that and as much more as the ingenuity of objection can devise into one scale, and for a moment weigh it against the shameful and ludicrous distress of a man who, in addressing the Deity, has begun a sentence he knows not how to finish, and who, while the congregation are hanging on his lips, is obliged to save himself by grasping at an expression inappropriate, incoherent, often ludicrous, oftener presumptuous—and has this never occurred?—not once, but a thousand times; and admitting it never had, its bare possibility is an argument irresistibly strong in favour of a form of prayer as the most proper for our infirmities, and most suitable to that solemnity with which worms of the dust should approach their Maker.*

Having thus noticed those objections which are generally

* Maturin's Sermons.

made against forms of prayer, we pass on to adduce *our* objections to extemporary prayer in public worship. And first, we would remark, that we can form no better conception of the right attitude of a Christian congregation than by assuming that it is a deputation going into the presence of the King of Kings for the express purpose of presenting a petition on behalf of themselves, the church, and the world. So far as prayer is a part of divine service, this seems to be a fair description of the business in hand. Now, bearing in mind the way rashness of speech and irreverence of expression are denounced, and how carefully God guarded his people against such carelessness in prayer, let us consider how a deputation would demean themselves when going into the audience chamber of an earthly king. Can we suppose that the deputation (supposing them to be in solemn earnestness petitioning for a favour) would risk the expression of their prayer on the impromptu language of a spokesman? Would they not commit it to writing for fear there should be any mistake in the expression of their want, or in the tone of their supplication? Or would they (which is more preposterous still) take no precaution to *agree beforehand together* as to what they would ask, and the way in which they should ask it? Would they intrust their petition to the discretion or ability of one of their number, and go into the king's presence actually ignorant of the prayer which as a body they were going to present? How would such conduct be regarded by an earthly king? Would he not more highly esteem those who approached him with a well weighed, carefully drawn up petition? But it may be said, this illustration has no weight, inasmuch as it is idle to compare things temporal and spiritual, and that God is a being above being influenced by such trifles. True, God is not to be influenced by outward appearance; but let us remember that though "He knows our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking," yet that He has made our asking a condition of our receiving; He has made our words essential: why not, therefore, use the best words? Now if the Almighty will not bestow His favours unless they are implored, He will not bestow them unless

they are *rightly* implored. He makes asking the condition of receiving, and yet it is possible to ask and receive not because we "ask amiss." *Every thing* offered up to Him must be the best of its kind; "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing, for I am a great *King* saith the Lord of Hosts."—Mal. i., 14, and 1 Cor. xiv., 15. Our prayers, therefore, must be the best we can offer—the most reverent in tone, the most expressive of our wants, and the most suitable to our position—and these conditions cannot be secured when one individual is allowed the whole responsibility of speaking for a congregation to the great King.

Again, we object to the system of extemporary public prayer, because it is inconsistent with the rule laid down by St. Paul, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." The Apostle gave this decision when condemning the practice of praying in an unknown tongue. The people could not in such case pray with the understanding, because they did not know what the minister was saying. But we hold that in extemporary prayer the people are nearly as badly off, for they do not know what the minister is *going to say*. We shall see this more fully if we reflect that the people can exert their "understanding" in prayer either before it is offered up, or while it is offered up. The first is the Episcopal method, inasmuch as we are "agreed together touching any thing we ask." The second is the method of those who join in extemporary prayer. Now if they are exerting their understanding during the offering of prayer, there is an end to devotion. The cold calculation whether the language be such as their understanding approves of, checks devout emotions, and before their understanding has done its work on one sentence of the prayer, the minister has passed on to another, and thus the understanding is kept constantly in exercise, to the extinction of fervent aspiration and intense devotion.

In order, then, to avail ourselves of our Lord's promise, "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my

Father which is in heaven," and also to fulfil the condition imposed by the Apostle, "I will pray with the understanding also," there must be a clear, definite arrangement, whereby, as worshippers, we may offer prayers which our understanding approves, and on which, as a congregation, we have agreed, and this can only be done by the use of a Liturgy or pre-composed form of prayer. Listening to a sermon, even though the understanding endorses every assertion made, cannot be called preaching; and listening to prayer, while the understanding is engaged in examining its merits, cannot be called praying.

Again, the advocates of extemporary public prayer are guilty of inconsistency in denouncing forms, while themselves are led by a form. To the minister, and to him alone, are the prayers extemporary, that is, composed on the instant—on the spur of the moment. The words, as they flow from his mouth, become a form to the audience, and unless they accept it, they must go without any other. The only difference between the extemporary and Liturgical systems is, that in the one case it is the minister who dictates the prayer, in the other it is the Church, through the Prayer Book. In both cases the congregation are compelled to take what is set before them; but the Episcopal congregation are bound to the form with their eyes open and their understanding assenting; the other, while "they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants" of a form.

Another inconsistency of which the advocates of extemporary prayer are guilty, is that of *singing* forms of prayer, and yet refusing to *say* forms of prayer. Forms in verse are allowable—forms in prose are intolerable. Why should this be? Does not the Apostle place the two acts of worship, prayer and praise, on the same footing? "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Now it is admitted that extemporary language is not necessary to the *singing* of prayer with the spirit and the understanding, neither is it necessary to the *saying* of prayer with the spirit and the understanding.

The last objection that we shall urge against the system of extemporary public prayer is a serious one. It is this—it is a powerful means of introducing and fostering false doctrine and heresy. In America the religious ideas of the people are in a great degree suggested and perpetuated by the prayers they hear. If then a minister embodies religious error constantly in his prayer, it will gradually leaven his hearers. False doctrine in a sermon is not half so dangerous to the audience as the same false doctrine in public prayer; and the reason is obvious: in prayer the people take it for granted that the minister will not dare to address the Deity in a heterodox manner. It is never suspected during the fervour of praying, that the excited language and the earnest petition contain unscriptural sentiments; but the mischief is that the constant repetition of such error in the language of prayers, by degrees brings men to think that what they have so often heard uttered with such energy of voice and unction of manner, must be founded on truth. A heretical minister has therefore only to embody his views in his prayers sufficiently often, and they will become stereotyped on the minds of his congregation. The heresy, from being often *prayed*, at last comes to be *believed*. It has been well said, that in this respect a form of prayer is a safe-guard against heterodoxy; a minister may be heretical in the pulpit, but provided he is bound to a form of prayer, his words in the prayer-desk will convict him, from the contrast they exhibit to the teaching of his sermons, and the congregation will soon detect the inconsistency.

Having thus answered the objections to forms of prayer, and stated the objections to the extemporary system, the next question is, are the forms of the Episcopal Church the best we can get; do they satisfy the cravings of the human heart, and meet the approbation of the human understanding? This can only be ascertained by the examination of the meaning and structure of our services, on which, perhaps, we shall enter hereafter; but we would first remark that those forms which have come down to us from immemorial antiquity, and which have endured the test of time without loss of

popularity among some of the wisest and best of mankind, which were once thrown aside, but gladly embraced again after experience of their loss, must possess strong claims on our regard, and contain great intrinsic excellence. Furthermore, not only Episcopalians, but the wisest and most holy men of all Christian denominations testify to the excellency of our forms, in such glowing language that it is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that those prayers and praises which are eulogized alike by those who use them, and by those who do not, are the noblest that have yet appeared in Christ's Church militant.

Dr. Barnes, a well known author, and a Presbyterian, says, "We have always thought that there are Christian hearts and minds that would find more edification in the forms of worship in the Episcopal Church than in any other. We have never doubted that many of the purest flames of devotion that rise from earth, ascend from the altars of the Episcopal Church, and that many of the purest spirits that the earth contains minister at those altars, or breathe forth their prayers and praises in language consecrated by the use of piety for centuries."

The New York Christian Observer, the representative of the Dutch Reformed Church in America, says of the Episcopal Church, "Her spirit stirring Liturgy and a scrupulous adherence to it, have, under God, preserved her integrity beyond any denomination of Christians since the Reformation."

The Rev. Dr. Cumming, a celebrated Presbyterian divine, says, "I shall never forget how thrilling I felt one clause in the English Liturgy on my first entering an Episcopal Church. It is perhaps the finest sentence and the sweetest prayer in the language: 'In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us.'"

Dr. Doddridge, another Presbyterian divine, says, "The language is so plain as to be level to the capacity of the meanest, and yet the sense is so noble as to raise to the capacity of the highest."

Dr. Clarke, the great Methodist commentator, declares

our Liturgy to be "superior to every thing of the kind produced, either by ancient or modern times; several of the prayers and services of which were in use from the first ages of Christianity." He says again, "The Liturgy is almost universally esteemed by the devout and pious of every denomination, and, next to the translation of the scriptures into the English language, is the greatest effort of the Reformation. As a form of devotion it has no equal in any part of the universal church of God. Next to the Bible it is the book of my understanding and my heart."

Robert Hall, the brightest light that ever shone among the Baptists, and one that would have been bright in any firmament, confesses that "the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervour of its devotions, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions."

The heavenly minded Baxter, another non-conformist, whose writings have prepared hundreds for that saints' rest of which he wrote, says: "The constant disuse of forms is apt to breed giddiness in religion, and to make men hypocrites who shall delude themselves with conceits that they delight in God, when it is but in those novelties and varieties of expression that they are delighted, and therefore I do advise forms to fix Christians and make them sound."

As Mr. Wesley for the Methodists, so Baxter prepared a Liturgy for the Non-Conformists, and like Wesley he sought the consolations of the Church Liturgy in the hour of death; and Watson, a Methodist divine as great as either of these, said just as his soul took wing to paradise, "Read the *Te Deum*, it seems to unite one in spirit with the whole Catholic Church in earth and heaven."*

When such testimony is borne to the beauty, sublimity, and scriptural character of the Liturgy by those who were outside the Church, is it surprising that Churchmen, who have been brought up inside her pale, and on whose ears her prayers fall like melody, recalling the happiest associations of life, should recommend to all men to make trial of the

* Vid. "Looking for the Messiah," p. 104.

power of the Liturgy in spirit and in truth—to see whether they cannot realize the gratification of being able to appreciate “those beautiful collects,” which, says Lord Macaulay, “have soothed the griefs of forty generations of Christians?”

We cannot be blind to the fact that the idea of a Liturgy as a substitute for that system under which congregations are merely *passive recipients of such forms as are put into their minds* by the minister for the day, is gaining fresh ground every year. Men are beginning to ask, if Calvin left a Liturgy for his disciples, and if Luther composed one for the Lutherans, and Knox compiled one for the Presbyterians, and Baxter prepared one for his followers, and Wesley commanded the Methodists to adhere to the Liturgy; why should not a return to the primitive practice of the Church of Christ be resorted to again, especially since the great advantages expected from extemporary services have not been realized? That the idea of the utility of introducing Liturgies is deeply agitating the thoughtful portion of the religious world, is forcibly proved by the appearance of two new Liturgies. The German Reformed Church have prepared and published a Liturgy for the use of their churches in the United States, and what is more striking still, a “Service Book for Public Worship” has been prepared especially for use in the chapel of Harvard University. Nothing more significant of a revolution in the christian mind, on the subject of forms of prayer, can be imagined, than that at Harvard—the first and most influential college in America—the fountain-head of all that is ablest in New England Congregationalism and Unitarianism, there should arise a *Liturgy*, a form of public prayer, after two centuries of bitter antagonism to the principles of a Book of Common Prayer. Hear the reasons assigned by the divines of Harvard for this wondrous innovation; the preface to the work says, “The object of this Service Book is to make our public worship more *interesting*, more *reverential*, more *various*, more *congregational*, and more *effectual* in promoting the sacred purposes for which the worship is offered.” An Episcopalian could not, if he tried, express

in more suitable language the merits of the Liturgy, than is used by the learning and piety of New England in describing the advantages of forms of prayer; but the reason is evident. The compilers go on to say, "Though the circumstances have required a considerable deviation from the Book of Common Prayer, *that is recognised as the most complete body of Liturgical exercises in our language.*"

With all these testimonials to the advantages of Liturgies in general, and to the excellency of our Liturgy in particular, there should be no surprise at the attachment which intelligent and educated Churchmen manifest for that "form of sound words" which has served as a vehicle to transport their best emotions to the Throne of Grace; there should be no surprise that they should desire to popularise its claims and to perpetuate its use. The true marvel is, that men are to be found to disparage and traduce it; and yet what is it which some thus lightly esteem? What is the principal ingredient in our Lord's day services? We answer, the unadulterated, unmutilated word of God. We might naturally expect that exception be taken to some supposed deficiency, or some disliked arrangements in our service. The tastes of christian men will differ, as to the minor details, in carrying out a great principle; but we think that the fact of God's word forming the main bulk of the Episcopal Liturgy, should serve as a shield to protect it from many a reproach. If we deduct from the order of morning prayer the portions of holy Scripture which are read, there will remain but a small residuum for the Church to claim as the compilation or composition of her martyrs or her saints. The opening sentences of the Morning Service, the Lord's Prayer, the Versicles, the Venite, the Psalms of David, the first and second Lessons, the Chants after the second Lesson, the Ten Commandments, the Epistle and Gospel, and the Offertory, are the express, unaltered words of Scripture. And if to these we add the portions of the prayers which express our wants and confess our sins in Bible language, we must come to the conclusion that the Church which gave the Bible to the people

in the vulgar tongue, has taken the best means of impressing its sentiments on their hearts by embodying it in their prayers; and we must moreover declare that he who wilfully disparages the Liturgy, disparages the Bible so far as it forms an ingredient in the Liturgy, and we have seen how largely the very words of Scripture enter into its composition.

Indeed, it is probable that as the Bible itself is always least valued when it is least known, and depreciated oftenest by those who seldom study it; so the Prayer Book, because it is misunderstood, fails to be appreciated as it deserves. And yet unconsciously is the Protestant world a debtor to those fixed and unwavering forms which have perpetuated evangelical truth and Apostolic order, not only in creeds and articles, but in prayers and praises, which daily repeated and unceasingly ringing in the ears of thousands of worshippers, proclaim that God is to be served "in spirit and in truth," with "reverence and godly fear."

The task of eulogising the Liturgy is indeed a pleasant and an easy one. It is no difficult matter to magnify those prayers which have thrilled the heart of so many saints who have departed this life in God's faith and fear. No better means of holding communion with our Maker have been yet devised by the wit of man, and the Liturgy is still that ladder by which even angels might ascend in lauding and magnifying God's holy name. Many an one, unguided by its forms and abandoned to his own self-indited prayers, would gladly (but for artificial hindrances) embrace its aid, and imitate its flowing and majestic language, from a consciousness that it contrasts with the multitude of extemporaneous effusions, as the calm and solemn river does with the meandering and babbling rivulet; while many on the other hand, who pretend to despise it, constantly and without acknowledgment employ its language. These and many other points remain to be urged, but we must conclude by reminding those who are strangers to the feelings of reverence with which we regard the Liturgy, that the foundation of our attachment is not merely a sentimental love for a time honoured, literary

treasure, but the firm belief that the Liturgy is the best promoter of the true spirit of prayer, and that time has proved its tendency to edification. It is the steadiest scaffolding by which the Christian soul may mount heavenward in prayer and praise; but alas! like God's other blessings, it is frequently disregarded to the extent of wringing from many a pious Churchman, who views the apathy of his brethren in God's 'house, the exclamation of God himself, "They have well said all that they have spoken, oh! that there were such an heart in them."
